



AGENDA ITEM: 7

DATE OF MEETING: October 19, 2011

ACTION: X

INFORMATION:

APPROVE OPTION TO EXTEND PARENT EDUCATION AND OUTREACH CONTRACT

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

First 5 California staff requests approval of the option to extend the Parent Education and Outreach Contract for three years.

EARLY LEARNING YEARS

Since the inception of Proposition 10, a state mandate of First 5 California has been to educate parents, grandparents, teachers, and other important figures in a child's life about the role they play during their earliest years. This mandate is accomplished through a cohesive and integrated public education and outreach effort that reaches families with young children where they live, shop, work, eat, and play.

Decades of research show that the greatest opportunity to impact a child's development is during their **first five years when 90 percent of a child's brain develops**. This early brain "wiring" impacts a child's capacity to learn and develop social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

First 5 California's public education efforts are at the core of its **Parent Signature Program** because parents are a child's first teacher. Every decision they make – from the food they serve to the amount of quality time they spend with their child – affects his brain growth development, establishing a foundation for all later development, behavior, learning, and health.

PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS STIMULATE ACTION

The mission of any public education campaign is to create awareness, foster understanding, and motivate action. There are several examples of recent public awareness campaigns that have made measurable differences in our society.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (1994 to present) - For years, little was known about sudden infant death syndrome, or SIDS. Babies would die in their sleep, and it was presumed that little could be done to prevent those deaths.

Today, there is no longer a mystery surrounding SIDS. We now know many SIDS deaths are accidents caused by unsafe sleep practices.

In 1992, the American Academy of Pediatrics came out with the recommendation that babies be placed on their backs to sleep, not on their stomachs, to reduce the risk of SIDS. The "Back to Sleep" public health campaign that began in 1994 proved very successful. Messages on safe sleeping practices – namely placing babies on their backs to sleep, among other strategies – were targeted to parents, caregivers, and health care providers.

The campaign had a direct positive impact on behavior. By 2000, the percentage of infants placed on their backs to sleep had increased dramatically, and the overall SIDS rates have fallen by more than 50 percent.

Safety Belt Education (1985 to present) - The single most effective protection against death and serious injury in a car crash is the safety belt. Yet only 11 percent of adults in the nation wore a seat belt in 1982, prior to the first state law requiring seat belt use.

Today, seat belt use is up to 85 percent nationally, saving tens of thousands of lives and billions in costs to society. Along with the laws enacted, several social marketing campaigns have contributed to this major public behavior change, resulting in a 74 percent increase in seatbelt use.

In 1985, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Ad Council launched the Safety Belt Education campaign featuring two crash test dummies – “Vince and Larry” – that used humor to remind Americans that “You can learn a lot from a dummy!”

In the first six years of the campaign, PSAs garnered more than \$337 million in donated media time and space. The spots aired on TV, radio, and in magazines. The campaign literally became part of American culture – as epitomized by “Vince and Larry” becoming a part of the permanent collection of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s *Click It or Ticket* campaign has a catchy name and a simple message. Their primary audience is men ages 18-34, the least likely population segment to wear seat belts. Each year, law enforcement agencies nationwide join forces around Memorial Day for an enforcement blitz, which is supported by national and local paid advertising and earned media campaigns.

Between the “Vince and Larry,” and a high-visibility enforcement campaign *Click It or Ticket*, the Centers for Disease Control reported earlier this year that today almost 6 out of 7 U.S. drivers always wear a seat belt when driving or riding in a motor vehicle.

THE PARENT SIGNATURE PROGRAM

In 2009, as the economic downturn took an even greater toll on low-income, underserved, and high-risk families, First 5 California focused on reaching these families, with an emphasis on diverse ethnicities. The Hard to Reach Populations Research Project, initiated by First 5 California, guided its efforts and has been utilized along with 2010 Census data to target information efficiently and effectively to these diverse segments, including messages geared to African American, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Hmong, Caucasian, and Latino audiences.

Feedback from multiple focus groups conducted by our contractor has shown that all parents want their children to thrive and be successful. Low-income parents share these hopes and dreams for their children, but they are faced with multiple competing factors that limit their time and resources. In these difficult economic times, parents (especially moms) may be juggling two or more jobs. Research found that many of these mothers clean 5-9 houses a week while caring for aging parents and multiple children. Naturally, these added stresses and time constraints impact the choices parents make for their children, whether it's to stop at a fast-food restaurant or let their children watch too much television. Through its outreach efforts, First 5 California delivers the important message to remind parents and caregivers that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no television time for children under age two, and less than two hours of quality programming a day for older kids.

Specifically, First 5 California's Parent Signature Program consists of an integrated parent education and outreach strategy designed to engage and empower parents of children 0 to 5. Based on the Social Learning Model, this program provides succinct and actionable information to parents, such as:

- Help me drink healthy. **Water and milk** are the way to go.
- **Let's Move.** The more they exercise now, the less chance they'll develop health problems, like obesity and Type 2 diabetes.
- **Read** to your child from birth.
- The **dangers of secondhand smoke** for young children.

Of particular importance is nutrition and physical activity to fight obesity. The prevalence of childhood obesity has reached alarming proportions, with 1 in 3 children under the age of 5 considered obese. Almost 10 percent of infants and toddlers carry excess weight for their height, and slightly more than 20 percent of children between the ages of two and five already are overweight or obese. Because early obesity can track to adulthood, efforts to prevent obesity should begin long before a child enters school.

While there are public outreach efforts aimed at curbing obesity nationwide, very little – if any – of these messages have been geared to parents and caregivers of infants, toddlers, and preschool children. For this and other reasons, it is essential that First 5

California sustain its outreach efforts on the importance of nutrition and physical activity to fight obesity in these young children.

Both the fast-food and beverage industries are targeting moms and their young children with marketing messages for cheap and easy meals with minimal nutritional value. According to a Federal Trade Commission report conducted as part of a Congressional inquiry into rising childhood obesity rates, food companies spent \$1.6 billion to market their products to children in 2006. Children now see about one-third more fast food TV ads than they did less than a decade ago, while preschoolers see 21 percent more.

Not only are low-income families being bombarded with these fast-food and beverage messages, but in many cases healthier alternatives – such as sources for fresh fruits and vegetables – are not as readily available in their low-income neighborhoods. These families must resort to purchasing unhealthy foods from nearby fast food restaurants or local corner stores, whose selections often consist of canned and processed foods and little, if any, fresh produce.

In order to be effective, it's essential that messages targeting these audiences are crafted with an understanding of the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives. First 5 California, along with the contractor, used the Hard to Reach Populations and Pew Research Reports to obtain a baseline understanding of the target audience, in addition to conducting a series of focus groups across the state. This foundational research examined the needs and media consumption habits of hard-to-reach communities so that its ensuing messaging campaign would most effectively inform and help modify behavior.

The Parent Signature Program includes messages strategically placed throughout the state at critical locations where parents are making decisions for their families. They're on **grocery carts** and TV monitors at the **supermarket checkout line**, in front of **convenience stores** and near **WIC offices** reminding parents about good nutritional habits as they're making choices about food purchases – and on **bus TVs** and **shelters** as families catch a ride to work and day care.

The objective is to get information into the hands of parents whenever and wherever they are searching for help. In this increasingly digital era, research indicates parents of all income brackets are using their smart phones to inform decisions that will impact their children, such as finding recipes, games to play inside on a rainy day, and ways to prepare their children for school. This is why a central component of our public education and outreach campaign has been **disseminating messages digitally**, including the development of a parent website.

OVERVIEW OF OUTREACH METHODS

Through the Parent Signature Program, it's estimated that **96% of the approximately 5 million parents and caregivers of children 5 and under** have been reached in their daily lives through the following outreach, outlined in Attachment 1.

Programs of this type are shown to be **powerful investments**. The Chicago Longitudinal Study¹ examined parental involvement during pre-kindergarten and found that it serves as a “gateway to involvement during the child’s elementary years.” In fact, the study estimates that low-income family outreach and support programs “saved taxpayers \$4 and participants \$7 for every dollar invested in the program.” **That is an \$11 return on investment for every dollar spent.**

The digital component of our program also includes the use of social media, reaching parents several times a day with parenting tips and early learning information through Facebook and Twitter. Our social media efforts are intended not only to inform parents of young children, but to engage and inspire them to action. Both First 5 California’s Twitter and Facebook pages rank in the top 10 California agency feeds, with each average post seen by over 100,000 users.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE REVIEW

On September 29, 2011, First 5 California staff met with Commissioners Patrick Duterte and Joyce Iseri, as representatives of the Advisory Committee, to review and obtain support for moving forward on the continuation of the Parent Education and Outreach contract for an additional three years with a 10 percent reduction in the contract amount.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

In 2008, the State Commission approved a three-year contract with Fraser Communications after a competitive bid process. In January 2009, the contract was executed, and includes an “option to extend” clause, which means that First 5 California may extend the term of this agreement under the same terms and conditions for up to three years after the contract expiration date on December 31, 2011.

In today’s fiscal climate, with reduced revenues and First 5 California’s recent contributions to state budget solutions totaling nearly \$300 million, staff recommends a 10 percent reduction in the proposed Fraser Communications contract over the next three years. First 5 California must secure approval from the Department of General Services (DGS) to change any terms of the agreement, including a reduction in the funding amount, through the Non-Competitive Bid review process. If approved, this action will result in a net savings of approximately \$3.5 million.

First 5 California staff will work closely with DGS and the contractor to ensure the reduction is implemented in a reasonable manner that reflects a net cost savings while ensuring that core levels of service are maintained.

¹Child Policy Brief: Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education; Georgia State University, Andre Young School of Policy Studies,
http://aysps.gsu.edu/ghpc/child_policy_initiative/issue_briefs/parentalinvolvement2182003.pdf, February 2002.